

[Milledge Richardson]

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Life Couch - History- Milledge Richardson Mulberry Grove Plantation Miss Shepherd

May 20, 1939.

Milledge Richardson

(Colored) 64

Yukon, Florida

Houseboy and Waiter

Mulberry Grove

Plantation.

Rose Shepherd, writer

MILLEDGE RICHARDSON,

MULBERRY GROVE PLANTATION

Milledge Richardson came to the office and was interviewed by Dr. Carita Doggett Corse, Saturday afternoon, May 20th.

In answer to questions, he said:

"I was born in 1875 and came to Mulberry Grove Plantation when I was nine years old.

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"I fed the chickens, swept the walks, washed dishes, and when I as older, waited on the table. I was one of two waiters, Ike Reece was the other one.

"The other negro servants and help were: Charity Liles, and Maria Liles, her daughter: the first housemaid and dairy-maid, and the daughter a housemaid. She is now a cook in the Cummer family.

"Nancy Reece was the cook, and Geo. Reece, Sr., her husband, was the gardner. Annie Brown was the washwoman, and her husband, Cornelius, cared for the horses, and was known as the 'lot man.' Jack Reece was the carpenter; Abe Reece, dairyman: The farmers and field hands were Frank Reece, Sam, Jack, and George, Jr. - all sons of George and Nancy Reece. Other farmers were: Henry Bird, Minus Lias, Tom Augustus, William Liles, Joe Halty,

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John Reece, son of George, Sr., Abraham, Jr., and Joe Jackson.

"The Reeds entertained a lot and had big parties and dances. The dances were held in the long shed-like house near the river, where the oranges were packed for shipping. Bill Bird played the fiddle for the dances. They also had picnics, barbecues, and fish-fries.

"The 20th of May was always celebrated as a big day for the negroes. We were given a big picnic, and there were horse races, foot races, baseball, dances - (breakdowns). Mr. Reed had a big rowboat, the Fannie Perry, eighteen or twenty feet long and with a four foot beam.

It took five men to row this boat, and we used to race it on the river.

"No, I never saw any ghosts, but once there was joke played on some of the darkies that was half believed. Cornelius Brown and some of the boys were returning from church one night. Their way led through a swamp. As they walked they started talking about ghosts,

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when suddenly in a wet slough on ahead, Brown say three white ghostly figures rise out of the swamp. He called the other negroes' attention to the sight, and they started yelling at the top of their voices, running as fast as they could. On looked back to see if he was followed, jumped a six foot gate, fell and called for help. When he finally got home he was so frightened he was afterwards sick for six months. The three white figures were Reed Pearson, with Sam and Joe Reece, draped in sheets. Cornelius had been told they were going to pull off this stunt, but the others did not know about it, and forever afterwards thought they had really seen ghosts in the swamp.

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"One of the songs that Bill Bird used to play on the fiddle was 'steal up, Sam.'

"Yes, we used to vote, but beforehand a five-gallon jug of whiskey would be portioned out.

"There were also big parties held during the time of the Spanish-American war. The steamers DuBarry and City of

Jacksonville used to bring crowds of people out to see the plantation, which was one of the finest in Florida.

"They did not have any tennis courts, but there were smoothed off croquet courts.

"I will try to collect some of the old songs we used to sing - songs sung while working in the fields, rowing songs, love songs, and dance tunes.

"Among the stories we used to tell the children were the one about the rabbit and the fox: [?] Fox went to Brer. Rabbit, and said - "Why didn't you go to the dance? There was plenty girls and only a few boys. Come on out, we're having another. Come on out." Brer. Rabbit looked out and he say - "Oho! All the tracks go in, but none of 'em come out."

"Another was about the Turkey, the Fox and the Rabbit. De Fox said; "Heard about de new law - fox eat no more Turkey, hounds don't bother Fox, and Fox don't bother Rabbit?

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Come on down and we'll talk about it.' 'No,' said Brer. Turkey. 'We'll talk right where we are.' Just then dogs were heard, and Brer. Fox said, 'Well, guess I'll be goin' 'long.' Turkey say, 'why de law say no more fox hunts,' den the 4 Fox say: 'Yeah, but dem dogs will run right over that law.'

"I do not know how the post office at Yukon got its name. All in the neighborhood petitioned for a post office to be established, and John Knight, a negro from Nibernia was the first postmaster and named it in 1893."

(Attached is a plat of the plantation with location of various buildings as Milledge richardson remembers it).